

The President. What I think is, they need to end the violence, and they need to discuss these matters between them, and they need to ask themselves, all of them do: What can we do to avoid unnecessarily provocative actions?

Let me also say to you that in a larger sense, what is important is that some progress be made on the issues that are the subject of the agreement. Now, we were supposed to have talks begin again this week to resolve those larger issues, and I had hoped that those talks—and I had some indication, some reason to believe that those talks could lead to some concrete progress which would diminish these tensions instead of seeing them aggravated.

So all I can tell you today is, I hope again that everyone will heed our position, which is to do nothing that will provoke a disruption and instead to get back to the talks and to the business of resolving the differences.

Q. Mr. President, have you spoken, with Chairman Arafat or Prime Minister Netanyahu, and what have they told you?

The President. Secretary Christopher has talked with Prime Minister Netanyahu more than once, and we have been in touch several times with Chairman Arafat through the channels that we always use, through our team there, to talk with him, and I have had extensive and regular reports over the last 2 days about this.

So we are working with them, and we are working with them to try to work this out to restore order and peace, and then to get on with the talks. We are prepared to do anything we can that will be of assistance, and I've made that clear, that I personally was prepared to do anything I could. The Secretary of State has worked hard on this. He's done a fine job as always in these matters. And I've been kept completely informed by him of everything that is going on. So, we're working hard.

Q. Mr. President, do you have any plans to talk with Prime Minister Netanyahu today?

The President. You know, he was in Europe, and he cut his trip short to go back to the Middle East, which I think was a very good thing for him to do. And when I come back from the Hill today, I'm going to get

another update, and then we'll make a decision about what's the most helpful thing I can do. I'm certainly prepared to put in whatever time and effort I can on this to be a constructive force. That's the most important thing.

Thanks.

Q. Have you offered to send a U.S. delegation over there if that's necessary, sir?

The President. Well, I think—let me just say—I would say on that—let me give you the same answer I did before to the other question. I'm going to be guided very heavily by Secretary Christopher's advice on that.

We are watching these events as they unfold, trying to keep up with them, trying to do what we can to have a constructive impact. And after I talk to him, if he believes that's the right thing to do, then that's something I would consider. But I do not—I want to do what will be constructive. I do not want to do anything that will not be helpful.

So, we're going to talk again today and see where we are and then see what the next step should be.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Democratic Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

September 26, 1996

Legislative Accomplishments

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. Let me join the Vice President in thanking Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt for their strong leadership in this session of Congress. Here at the end we have had a real spate of positive legislation coming out: improving our environment through safe drinking water and the pesticide protection act; health care reform; reforms in the pension systems for people who work for small businesses; the raise in the minimum wage. This has been a remarkable, remarkable last few days, and these leaders have worked very hard to gather sup-

port for this legislation and to work in a constructive manner with those in the Republican majority.

But they have also done something else. They have protected Medicare, Medicaid, education, the environment, workers' pension funds, the earned-income tax credit for hard-working people and still continued to work toward a balanced budget, and I came here to thank them for that. I believe the American people want a Congress that will fight for the interests of working families, expand education opportunities, balance the budget in the right way and never, ever shut the Government down again. And I am committed to that; I know that they are.

Let me say that the strategy we have been pursuing for 4 years now is clearly working. The strategy of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community which includes all people who are willing to do their part is plainly working. We not only have 10½ million jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 7½ years, 4 years of declining deficits for the first time since before the Civil War so that now we've got a 60 percent reduction, but we saw the census numbers.

You heard the Vice President's headlines. Let me read you what today's headlines should be: Typical household income up \$898 in 1995, after inflation; family income up over \$1,600; since our economic plan passed the interest rates dropped and the economy started to grow. The largest decline in income inequality in 27 years—the largest decline in income inequality in 27 years; the largest decline in the number of Americans living in poverty in 27 years. These are remarkable turnarounds from a condition that many people thought was inevitable—from the American people growing apart, now we're growing together as we work together.

We had the biggest drop in the poverty rate in over a decade, the lowest poverty rates ever recorded for African-Americans and for senior citizens, the biggest drop in child poverty in 20 years and the biggest drop in poverty in female-headed households in 30 years. This country is on the right track, and we need to bear down and pursue that course.

And these leaders and their Members have helped us to do that, and for that I am very, very grateful.

Thank you.

1997 Budget

Q. Mr. President, in terms of the budget, do you feel like an 800-pound gorilla because Republicans have been seemingly willing to give you much of what you wanted, had no taste for a Government shutdown, a continuing resolution? Could you tell us what your feelings about that are?

The President. Well, I feel good about it, but that is the way that our Government has traditionally worked. We've gotten together, worked together, and made principled compromises, and we did make principled compromises here. And we're continuing to bring the deficit down and work toward a balanced budget. We must do that. I am for that.

And I am very gratified. I think the American people made it quite clear that they do not support the Government-shutdown way of governing America. They want us to work together, and I'm pleased by that.

Q. Are you satisfied with continuing resolutions?

The President. Well, we're still negotiating on that. I hope I will be. I'm satisfied with the process so far, but I haven't seen the product. So let me see the product before I tell you that.

Immigration Legislation

Q. Mr. President, are you willing to sign the congressional immigration report or in the conference report can still changes be made? What's your view?

The President. First of all, I'm gratified that we got the Gallegly amendment out of the immigration bill. I thought that was the right thing to do, certainly the right thing for children. Every law enforcement group in America supported our position. I feel good about it.

I want to withhold further comments on the immigration bill because it is a subject of intense negotiation now and they're working on how it might be resolved in the context of the continuing resolution and moving to get Congress out of town. So I don't want

to say anything that will complicate the work that's being done. I hope some progress can be made there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. at the Longworth House Office Building.

Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With Astronaut Shannon Lucid

September 26, 1996

The President. Hello.

Ms. Lucid. Hello.

The President. Welcome home.

Ms. Lucid. Why, thank you so much. It's so kind of you to call.

The President. Well, we're all so proud of you. We've been watching you, and I couldn't believe you walked off the shuttle.

Ms. Lucid. Well, I'm just really proud to be an American, and I'm just really proud to be part of this cooperative program that we have going with the Russians. It was just a great mission. And I just had a great time.

The President. Well, it was wonderful. And as I said, the whole country followed you, but I appreciate what you said about the cooperation with Russia, too. It really sets the stage for the work on the international space station. And it's very, very important. And I believe the way you captured the public imagination will also help us to build long-term support for the space program.

Ms. Lucid. Well, I think so. Of course, I don't know from a political standpoint or from the big boss standpoint, but I just know from the people that are actually working, you know, like the Cosmonauts and the Astronauts working together, that this works out just great. They were just wonderful people to work with.

The President. Yes, they are good people, and we're making real progress in working with them, I think.

Ms. Lucid. I think so. And it couldn't have been a better experience. And I just thoroughly enjoyed working with the Cosmonauts.

The President. The other thing that I wanted to say was that on behalf of my wife and daughter, is that you have been a terrific

inspiration for young women around the country and all around the world. And I know as you get out and around and people get to congratulate you, you'll see that. But it's a wonderful thing for these young girls that may have nontraditional aspirations to see someone like you up there doing that.

Ms. Lucid. Well, thank you, sir. Yes, I just didn't really give a thought to that. It was just something that I'd always wanted to do. And I was just very glad that it worked out.

The President. Did you have a good reunion with your kids?

Ms. Lucid. I sure did. [Laughter] And they're here nagging me already.

The President. Did you get your M&M's I sent you?

Ms. Lucid. Oh, I sure did. I wanted to thank you first thing. That was so nice. They're already into them.

The President. That's good.

Ms. Lucid. That was so nice and so thoughtful of you. I really, really appreciate that.

The President. Thanks. I'm going down to Texas tomorrow, and I just got a note that said you might be there at the time I land in Houston. If so, I hope I get to see you.

Ms. Lucid. Oh, well, that would be very nice. I hope that works out. That would just be great.

The President. Me, too. Well, congratulations. I know you want to go back to your family, but I just wanted to say hello. You've given us all a great deal to be proud of and a lot of thrills, and we're glad you're home safe and sound.

Ms. Lucid. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And it was very nice of you to call. I really appreciate that. Thank you so much.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Teleconference Remarks With the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers *September 26, 1996*

Thank you. I want you to save some of that energy for the next 5 weeks and 4 days; we need your help all the way. I thank you